

Preface

A Reader's Guide to the FEIS

This Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) is organized into a preface, six chapters (Volume I) and twelve appendixes (Volume II). A packet of alternative maps accompanies the document. The Revised Forest Plan (separate document) is a representation of the Preferred Alternative in the FEIS, as modified by the Record of Decision.

Preface - This section briefly describes the contents of each chapter and appendix in the FEIS (listed below). It also gives a brief history of forest planning and summarizes the development of the Revised Forest Plan and FEIS.

Chapter 1 - "Purpose and Need" describes the rationale behind forest plan revision. It explains the need for change and discusses the issues and concerns raised by the public. The decisions to be made in the Revised Forest Plan are described.

Chapter 2 - "The Alternatives" describes the process used to develop alternatives, lists important points common to all alternatives, describes the eight alternatives, and identifies the preferred alternative. Alternatives initially considered then eliminated from detailed analysis are briefly discussed. The effects of the eight alternatives on major topics are summarized.

Chapter 3 - "Environment and Effects" describes current conditions on the Chugach National Forest and the consequences of implementing each alternative, with a focus on the situation statements and effects.

Chapter 4 - "List of Preparers" lists those instrumental in writing the documents.

Chapter 5 - "List of Recipients" lists those who received copies of the FEIS and the Revised Forest Plan.

Chapter 6 - "Public Participation and Comment on the DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest Plan" describes the content analysis process and summarizes public comments on the DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest Plan.

References - This section lists the references cited in the FEIS.

Glossary - A glossary of terms provides definitions of technical and legal terms.

Appendixes - Appendixes provide additional information and detail on subjects addressed in the FEIS.

Appendix A - Situation Statements

Appendix B - Description of the Analysis Process

Appendix C - Roadless Areas

Appendix D - Wild and Scenic Rivers Evaluation

Appendix E - Silvicultural Systems

Appendix F - Access Management Plan

(also see Revised Forest Plan, Appendix B, Roads Analysis and
Access Management Plan)

Appendix G - Biological Assessment

Appendix H - Alternative Descriptions

Appendix I - Oil and Gas Leasing Stipulations

Appendix J - Management Prescription Activity Matrixes

Appendix K - Public Comments and Forest Service Responses

Appendix L - Vascular Plant Species Richness

Map Packet - Alternative Maps - No Action, Preferred, A, B, C, D, E, and F

Development of the Revised Forest Plan and EIS

Brief History of Forest Planning

Current forest planning regulations are an extension of historic Forest Service experience in land management planning. For many years the Forest Service has prepared plans to guide inventory development, identify special management areas, calculate sustainable use levels, and monitor resource conditions and trends. The planning process has evolved over time and increased in complexity in response to increasing demands for forest resources, changing desires and expectations of the American public, and changes in the legal statutes regulating federal land management activities.

Planning on National Forest System lands is currently governed by several key pieces of federal legislation: the Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of 1960; the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA); the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (RPA); and, the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA).

The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act requires management of the National Forest System lands to ensure coordination of multiple uses and a continued supply of goods and services for the American people. The broad multiple use categories under this act are outdoor recreation, range, timber, watershed, and wildlife and fish.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) incorporates environmental analysis and public participation into the land management planning process. The NEPA process is intended to help public officials make decisions based on

an understanding of environmental consequences and take action to protect, restore, and enhance the environment. The process also ensures that environmental information is made available to public officials and citizens before decisions are made and actions are taken. Implementation of NEPA requires accurate scientific analyses, expert agency input, and public review.

The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA) provides a comprehensive framework for planning on the national forests. While enactment of the RPA did not substantially alter planning procedures, it did make the development and maintenance of Land and Resource Management Plans a legal requirement. The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) amended the RPA in 1976.

The enactment of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) provided additional legal direction for forest planning. Regulations for implementing NFMA were developed in 1979 and updated in 1982 (36 CFR 219). The 1982 regulations detail the specifics of the forest planning process. Analytical and procedural requirements for development, revision, and significant amendment of forest plans were established. Requirements for monitoring and evaluating forest plan implementation were set. The Chugach National Forest's 1984 Forest Plan is being revised under these regulations.

Under NFMA, procedures for formulating and evaluating alternatives are described, and the alternatives are required to represent a full range of resource outputs and expenditure levels.

The Chugach National Forest's first Plan was issued in 1984 and NFMA regulations state that forest plans should be revised on a 10-year cycle or at least every 15 years.

Steps Taken in the Development of the Revised Plan and EIS

In June 1992 the Chugach published an "Evaluation Report of the Implementation of the Chugach National Forest Plan" (USDA Forest Service 1992c). This report is a review of the conditions on the land covered by the plan to determine whether conditions or demands of the public have changed significantly. Beginning in FY 1993 annual Forest Plan Monitoring and Evaluation reports were published. NFMA regulations require a monitoring and evaluation program on each forest. The objective of the program is to ascertain how well the current forest plan is performing.

The Analysis of the Management Situation (AMS) was published in April 1998 and is incorporated by reference into this FEIS (USDA Forest Service 1998b). The AMS determines the Forest's ability to supply goods and services in response to public demand, based on past and present land uses and current management direction. The AMS evaluates how well the 1984 Forest Plan addresses critical issues or revision topics. It also provides a basis for formulating a broad range of reasonable alternatives. A list of preliminary alternatives was included in the AMS.

A Notice of Intent to revise the Forest Plan and prepare an EIS was published in the Federal Register in April of 1997. In May of 1997, the Forest distributed the first volume of the "Revision Newsletter" to help determine if public demands have changed since the inception of the Forest Plan. In the fall of 1997, the Forest Service held a series of collaborative learning workshops in various communities in the vicinity of the Forest to identify public interests, conflicting interests and the potential for making improvements in conflict situations under the direction of the 1984 Forest Plan. As a result of the workshops and the mailing of the newsletter the Chugach National Forest received over 3,000 comments.

Over the course of two months all comments were reviewed, analyzed and summarized to identify 24 important interests of people who use the Chugach National Forest. Some public interests were in conflict with each other, such as motorized recreation vs. nonmotorized recreation, and were characterized as "situations." Six situations were identified and formed the basis for alternatives. They included:

- Ecological Systems Management;
- Habitat for Fish and Wildlife;
- Resource Development;
- Recreation/Tourism;
- Recommendations for Administrative and Congressional Designations; and,
- Subsistence.

On December 20, 1999, the Forest Supervisor approved the range of alternatives to be analyzed in detail in the DEIS. Alternatives A - F and the existing, No Action, alternative were to be analyzed in detail. Alternatives 6 and 13 were also included in the DEIS but not analyzed in detail. This represents the culmination of a period of intense activity both on the part of the public and the Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team), which developed an initial set of 30 alternatives and then reduced those to nine (Alternatives A – F, 6, 13, and the No Action Alternative). From these nine alternatives the Preferred Alternative was developed. Alternatives are described in detail in **Chapter 2** of this document. By design, each alternative represents a potential forest plan that meets legal and administrative requirements and that can be implemented if selected.

The next step in the revision process was to evaluate the environmental consequences of each alternative. A summary of these effects is presented in **Chapter 3** of this document. For each forest resource, resource specialists described its existing condition and discussed how the alternatives would affect the resource.

A DEIS and Proposed Revised Forest Plan was released for public review on September 15, 2000. During the 90-day comment period over 33,000 comments were received. After analysis and review of these comments by the ID Team, the

DEIS Preferred Alternative was modified. The resulting modified Preferred Alternative was analyzed and is displayed in this FEIS.

Summary of Changes in the FEIS

Following are a summary of changes made to the DEIS.

- The following table reflects changes that were made in Management Area prescriptions for the Preferred Alternative:

Management Area Prescription ¹	DEIS Preferred	FEIS Preferred
111 Primitive	11,750	11,750
121 Wilderness Study Area	0	0
131 Recommended Wilderness	1,352,730	1,413,350
132 Wild River	9,590	12,180
133 501(b) - Recommended Wilderness	449,210	442,490
135 501(b) - 1	0	445,170
141 Research Natural Area	23,730	23,730
210 Backcountry*	0	1,818,890
211 Backcountry	1,435,220	0
212 Backcountry Motorized	373,150	0
213 501(b) - 2	1,073,990	660,940
221 EVOS Acquired Lands	102,040	102,040
231 Scenic River	115,630	14,270
241 Municipal Watershed	970	960
242 Brown Bear Core Area	73,090	70,360
244 Fish and Wildlife Conservation Area	229,720	260,640
312 Fish, Wildlife and Recreation	182,630	159,820
313 Backcountry Groups	0	0
314 Forest Restoration	20,770	20,770
321 501(b) - 3	6,700	15,380
331 Recreational River	6,000	6,080
341 Developed Recreation / Reduced Noise	11,900	0
411 Resource Development	0	0
441 Developed Recreation Complexes	0	0
521 Minerals (site specific)	6,860	6,860
522 Major Transportation / Utility Systems (site specific)	5,900	5,900
Total Acres	5,491,580	5,491,580

¹ Note: Two new management prescriptions were developed for the modified Preferred Alternative:

1. 135 501(b) - 1: A new Wilderness-like management area prescription for the Copper River Delta – east.
2. 210 Backcountry*: A management area prescription that combines the 211 Backcountry and 212 Backcountry Motorized management area prescriptions. Motorized/Nonmotorized use is dealt with outside the prescriptions (see Chapter 3, Access Management).

- The following changes were made in Wild and Scenic River recommendations:
 - Dropped: Martin Creek, Portage Glacier, Columbia Glacier
 - Added: Russian River
- The budget allocations were updated
- The Recreation and Tourism sections, throughout the document, were rewritten
- Significant additional analysis was completed for:
 - Biodiversity
 - Aquatic Systems
 - Forest Vegetation
 - Wildlife
 - Social and Economic
 - Appendix F - Access Management Plan – several changes were made in the road, trail and route management for the Preferred Alternative
- The following Appendixes were added:
 - Appendix G – Biological Assessment
 - Appendix K – Public Comments and Forest Service Responses
 - Appendix L – Vascular Plant Species Richness
- Other minor additions and corrections were made and are reflected in the FEIS and Revised Forest Plan in response to public comment and ID Team review.